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A
S E R M O N

Preached at the Church in Brattle-Street,

B O S T O N,

THURSDAY, *September 27*, 1798.

A

Day religiously observed on Account

OF

The EPIDEMIC now prevailing in this Town,

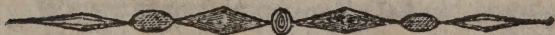
AND

Several other Seaports in AMERICA.

BY

JOHN LATHROP, D. D.

Printed by the Desire of many who heard it.



B O S T O N :

Printed by BENJAMIN EDES, in Kilby-Street,

1798.

S E R M O N

Preached at the Church in Brattle Street,

B O S T O N,

Thursday, September 22, 1798.

By religiously observed on Account

21313

The Epidemic now prevailing in this Town.

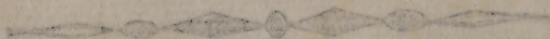
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Several other Sermons in America.

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APPENDIX.

With the hope of doing good, a few thoughts are offered on the causes of Contagion, and Pestilential Diseases, and the means of guarding against them.

“**C**ONTAGION is propagated by three “ causes, The air, diseased persons, and “ goods transported from infected places.”*

It is the first cause, which at the present time, engages our particular attention. As we have no reason to suppose the seeds of the Epidemic, which has given us so much distress, were imported, it is generally agreed, the cause is in the air.

We are therefore naturally led to inquire, what is there in the air we breathe, which may be considered as the cause of contagion and pestilential disease?

THE

THE researches of the philosophers and chemists of the present age, will help us, perhaps, to an answer.

NEARLY three quarters of "the elastic fluids" which compose the inferior stratum of air which "we inhabit,"* are noxious, & incapable of supporting life. It is by the presence of the other quarter, that health and life are preserved.

THE vital, or life-supporting part of the air, in the modern language of chemists, is called *oxygen*: the other parts, *azote*.

THE *azote*, or "mephitic part of atmospheric air," consists of vapours from mud, marshes, stagnant waters, fermenting and putrefying substances of all kinds; together with the air which has suffered the destruction of its *vital* part by passing the lungs of all the living creatures; and by supporting all the fires which are burning in all parts of the world.

A *redundancy* of the non-respirable part of air now mentioned, may be a cause sufficient to produce pestilential disorders of the worst kind.

LONG

* Lavoisier } Elements of Chemistry.
Fourcroy }

LONG continued *heat* without winds and storms, will produce such a redundancy. Long continued heat will not only produce noxious vapours, but by rarefying the atmosphere near the earth, it will so lessen the pressure, as to suffer those vapours to rise high enough to be received into our lungs—some of those vapours are so much heavier than the common air, in a temperate state of the atmosphere, as to creep along just above the surface of the earth, and settle down in vallies and low grounds. In the *Grotto del Cano*, the noxious air will kill the dog, who carries his nose near the ground, while a man, erect, receives no injury.

BUT if the cause of the most fatal pestilential diseases is to be found in the air, how shall we guard against them? We cannot prevent the heat. We have no command over the winds. The changes of the weather are, in no degree under our controul.—We can however remove many of those substances, which in hot weather, send forth poisonous *effluvia*. We can keep our streets clean. We can fill up or cleanse those *docks* and *slips* which *receive*, and which *expose* the most filthy substances, when the water retires. We can bury, or sink in the sea, those things which would offend and injure us, if left above ground.

WE can, from exhaustless springs on our own peninsula, or from fountains in the vicinity, we can, every day, through the summer, send refreshing streams, from elevated situations to all the lower parts of the town.

WE can plant trees on every vacant spot, which will repay us, not only by their beautiful appearance, but by drinking up the *azotic gas*, and breathing, from their leaves, the purest air.

WE can keep ourselves clean : We can keep our houses, and particularly our *lodging-chambers* clean : We can refrain from full meals of animal food, and from inebriating liquors : We can do many things to guard against contagious and pestilential diseases : And when we have done all in our power, we may trust the providence of God, with an easy mind.

A
S E R M O N.

A M O S, III. 2.

* YOU ONLY HAVE I KNOWN OF ALL THE FAMILIES
“ OF THE EARTH, THEREFORE I WILL PUNISH YOU
“ FOR YOUR INIQUITIES.”

THE prophet was directed to speak in the
name of the Lord, to the children of Israel,
—“ You only have I known, of all the families of
“ the earth, therefore I will punish you for your
“ iniquities.”

IN as much as “ the things which were written
“ aforetime were written for our learning,” it may
be a proper and useful exercise for us, on the
present serious occasion, to consider some of the
reasons, why those subjects of moral government,
who have received particular favours, and have
abused

abused them, have been marked out, in divine providence, by particular punishments.

GREAT caution however is to be used, in making up our judgment, with respect to individuals, or societies of men, from the sufferings of the present life.

THE friends of Job, we find had embraced an opinion, at that age of the world, that the greatest sufferers, are the greatest sinners. This also was the opinion of the Jews, who supposed those unhappy persons, who were destroyed by a tower in Siloam, which fell upon them, were the greatest sinners in Jerusalem. But this opinion, however popular, was discountenanced and rejected by the great teacher of mankind. He exhorted all who heard him to repent, as they hoped to escape destruction.

BUT while we use great caution, in making up our judgment with respect to individuals, or societies of men, from their circumstances in the present life, we have authority from the scriptures to say, that individuals, and nations of men, have been prospered on account of their virtues, and punished on account of their vices. While the sovereign of the world, is to be considered, as conducting the affairs of his government by the operation

ration of laws which he hath established, so that in a general way, neither love or hatred can be known by the circumstances of the children of men, it must be granted, that obedient subjects, have, in many instances, been encouraged by rewards, while obstinate and rebellious sinners, have been punished for their crimes.

HAVING made the foregoing observations, I will proceed to offer some reasons *why* those subjects of moral government, who have received particular favours and have abused them, have been marked out in divine providence, by particular punishments.

AND Ist. The honor of divine government may require, that singular punishments, under certain circumstances, should be inflicted, even in the present life.

ONE reason, and perhaps, the greatest of all, why the children of Israel were delivered from the bondage of Egypt, with a high hand, and conducted through the sea, and through the wilderness with an out-stretched arm, was to show the heathen nations, in a strong and convincing light, that Jehovah is infinitely superior to all who were called Gods, and that He alone is to be worshipped.

GOD knew Israel as his peculiar people. He declared himself, the God of Abraham, the God
of

of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Having made a solemn covenant with those patriarchs and their children, and granted them many important favours; having revealed to them his will, and given them commandments and ordinances to observe, his honour, as the Governor of the world, was connected with their conduct.

WHEN it was known among the heathen, that God sent plagues on the Egyptians, because their King refused to release the seed of Jacob from unreasonable servitude;—that he destroyed Pharaoh and his host in the red sea;—that he settled his redeemed people in a country which had been long promised them, and protected them when exposed to the numerous and powerful enemies round about them, there were particular and very strong reasons why they should be careful to obey all the commandments which the Lord their God had given them. When they discovered their ingratitude by forgetting their deliverer, and by practising those things which had been strictly forbidden, there were particular and strong reasons why they should be punished.

THE prophets and ministers of the most High, were careful to proclaim abroad, that God had chosen Israel to be his inheritance,—a people to shew forth his praise: and therefore when Israel chose

chose to be the inheritance of others, and to shew forth the praise of strange Gods, the honour of Jehovah required, that Israel should be punished. The sin of forsaking the true God, and giving that worship to idols which is due to Jehovah, was a public sin ; it was therefore highly proper, that some punishments of a public nature should be inflicted.

THE propriety of inflicting particular punishments on the children of Israel, after they had abused the singular favours which had been conferred upon them, will farther appear, when we consider they were threatened with distressing calamities, in order to guard them against apostacy and rebellion.

WITHOUT consulting any other parts of the sacred volume, the xxviiiith chapter of the book of Deuteronomy will furnish sufficient evidence of the care which Jehovah exercised over the morals of his ancient covenant people, both by promising blessings to the obedient, and threatening punishments, varying in degree, but dreadful in the end, on all such as resolved to do wickedly.

WE go on. to say,

Idly. ANOTHER reason why singular punishments are inflicted on such members of God's
moral

moral government, as have received particular favours and have abused them, may be to promote the reformation and real good of transgressors themselves.

In order to qualify imperfect creatures for advancement in happiness, it seems necessary, that in some stage of their existence, they should be subjected to a course of trial and discipline.—Nor are we to suppose it hath been the peculiarly hard lot of mankind to be placed under such circumstances. Beings superior to us have been tried. What were the particular circumstances of trial to which the angels were subjected we know not. We know, from the sacred books, a number of them fell from their first estate—"left their own habitation, and are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day."

Our parents, made in the image of God, and free from sin, were tried, and fell. We all have our trials. We are all in a state of discipline. Some of the children of men have greater trials than others. It hath so happened, that some **who** were under the most favourable discipline, and **possessed** the highest advantages for moral and religious improvement, have been overcome in the day of trial,
and

and have wandered in the way of sin. In mercy to such persons God hath corrected them. By sufferings he hath taught them the evil of transgression. To this point we have the testimony of David, a man, in many respects, highly favoured, but extremely irregular in his conduct. "Before "I was afflicted," says he, "I went astray ; but "now have I kept thy word." Like good effects of affliction have been experienced by serious people in all ages.

SUCH are the imperfections of human nature, and of the present life, that small has been the number of those who have maintained purity of moral character, and a truly devotional spirit, during a course of uninterrupted prosperity, and worldly enjoyment. When *Agur* prayed that he might possess mediocrity of circumstances, he knew that uninterrupted prosperity very often draws off the heart from God. "Give me neither poverty nor riches : feed me "with food convenient for me, lest I be full and "deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?"

WHEN people are drawn away from a sense of dependance on God, and from the path of duty, by their successes, and by the abundance which they possess, afflictions and disappointments, may do them good.

IN the course of discipline in which we are placed, we either improve in virtue and knowledge, or we degenerate : The means which are used with us in providence, will either have a good effect, or leave us less susceptible of good impressions.

THERE are those, who by the bounties of heaven, are filled with gratitude : who study to know what returns they shall make for divine favours : who endeavour to honour God, and to make their fellow-creatures happy, in the use which they make of their substance. Such men are good stewards : they feel the pleasure of doing good, and their reward will be great in Heaven.

OTHERS there are, who are proud of what they possess. Prosperity makes them vain and selfish. When they ought to be more pious, they are more irreligious : When they have more power to do good, they have less of the disposition. They reject the sollicitations of the poor and needy, that they may have the more to consume in the gratification of their appetites and passions.

WHEN men who were once sober and virtuous, who in moderate circumstances, attended to the duties of religion, and felt the sufferings of the needy and afflicted, lose their good impressions ;
and

and in more elevated circumstances, show that they regard nothing but their own pleasures, it may be a mercy to correct them. When they show that they cannot bear success, but the more they have, the more they increase in pride and folly, it may be a mercy to strip them of their substance, and humble them by losses and sufferings.

THAT the purposes of God are kind and benevolent, in the sufferings which he brings on the children of men, we are clearly taught in the sacred writings. He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. If need be we are in heaviness. The fruit of affliction is to take away sin.

WE add once more,

III^{dly}. GOD may inflict particular punishments on such members of his moral government, as have received particular favours, and have abused them, in order to afford suitable warning to others.

ONE important end for which the judgments of Heaven fell upon the disobedient children of Israel, was the conviction which their sufferings afforded, even to the heathen nations, that the ways of God are right ; and that he will not suffer the workers of iniquity to escape the effects of his displeasure.

Thus we read, in the xxxixth of Ezekiel : “ The
 “ heathen shall know that the house of Israel went
 “ into captivity for *their iniquities* :—because
 “ they transgressed against me, therefore hid I my
 “ face from them, and gave them into the hand
 “ of their enemies.”

MORE solemn warnings cannot be given to the wicked children of men, than those which were given to the children of Israel, both by the words which were spoken to them, and by the punishments which in the course of divine providence, were inflicted upon them.

THEY were the peculiar people of the most High. God chose them from the nations of the earth, that by them his name might be known, and that they might shew forth his praise. He delivered them from the bondage of Egypt : He protected them when exposed to their enemies : He fed them with bread from Heaven : He established with them his covenant : He gave them particular instructions with respect to their conduct : He promised them the highest temporal felicity as the reward of obedience, and threatened them with extreme wretchedness, in case they rejected his law, and chose to rebel against him.

"It shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hear-
 "ken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to
 "observe to do all his commandments and his
 "statutes, which I command thee this day, that
 "all these curses shall come upon thee, and
 "overtake thee."

"CURSED shalt thou be in the city, and cursed
 "shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy
 "basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit
 "of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase
 "of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed
 "shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed
 "shalt thou be when thou goest out."

"THE Lord shall send upon thee, cursing vexa-
 "tion and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine
 "hand unto, for to do, until thou be destroyed,
 "and until thou perish quickly ; because of the
 "wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast
 "forsaken me."

"THE Lord shall bring thee and thy King which
 "thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which
 "neither thou, nor thy fathers have known ; and
 "there shalt thou serve other Gods, wood and
 "stone. And thou shalt become an astonishment,
 "a proverb, and a by-word, among all nations,
 whither

“whither the Lord shall lead thee.—All these
 “curses shall come upon thee and shall pursue thee,
 “and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed : be-
 “cause thou hearkenest not unto the voice of the
 “Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and
 “his statutes which he commanded thee.”

BETWEEN eight and nine hundred years after the date of the solemn charge given by Moses to the children of Israel, in which you will find the sentences we have now repeated, the awful threatenings were executed in the captivity, of the whole family, which God brought up from the land of Egypt.

ABOUT seven hundred and twenty years before Christ, the King of Assyria, took the capital of the ten tribes, and carried the inhabitants into captivity.

FIVE hundred and ninety years before Christ, Jerusalem was taken by the king of Babylon, the Temple was burned, and the once highly favoured people of God were subjected to a humble and suffering condition, which continued seventy years.

THIS captivity was predicted by Jeremiah, and by several other prophets. “Surely thus saith
 “the Lord, so will I give Zedekiah the King of
 “Judah,

“ Judah, and his Princes, and the residue of Jeru-
 “ salem that remain in this land, and them that
 “ dwell in the land of Egypt. And I will deliver
 “ them to be removed into all the Kingdoms of the
 “ earth, for their hurt, to be a reproach & a proverb,
 “ a taunt and a curse, in all the places whither I shall
 “ drive them. And I will send the sword, the fa-
 “ mine and the pestilence among them, till they be
 “ consumed from off the land which I gave unto
 “ them and their fathers !” *

IN the history of the Kings of Israel and Judah,
 we find this prophecy very exactly fulfilled. †

THE judgments of Heaven, which were inflicted
 on the whole family of the children of Israel, stand
 as solemn warnings to all who live in wickedness :
 If God spared not the seed of Abraham his friend,
 but accomplished the things which he threatened,
 when they rebelled against him, no other nation
 surely can expect to be treated with more tender-
 ness.

To answer valuable purposes in the moral go-
 vernment of the world, certain periods are marked
 with the record of awful judgments, which God
 hath seen fit to inflict on the children of men.

THE

* Jeremiah xxivth Chap. † 2 Kings xxv.

THE deluge, in the time of Noah, was brought on the inhabitants of the earth, as the punishment of the wickedness which every where prevailed.

“SODOM and Gomorrha, and the cities about them, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

BESIDES the judgments which were inflicted on Judah and Israel, in consequence of their ingratitude and rebellion, the history of later ages, informs us of seasons, when the inhabitants of the world have been *thinned* and wasted away by desolating calamities.

IN the year of our Lord 542, a pestilential disorder appeared first in Egypt, on the eastern channel of the Nile, “from thence, tracing as it were a double path, it spread to the East, over Syria, Persia, and the Indies; and penetrated to the West along the coast of Africa, and over the continent of Europe.” This Plague, the greatest and most general on the annals of the world, continued fifty-two years:—Its progress was every where marked, with desolation and ruin. Such were its dreadful ravages, that in strong language it is said to have “depopulated the earth.”*

SOME

SOME have supposed one third part of the inhabitants of the world were destroyed by the plague which we have now mentioned : but “ no facts have
 “ been preserved to sustain an account, or even a
 “ conjecture, of the numbers that perished in this
 “ extraordinary mortality.” “ Many cities of the
 “ East were left vacant : the decrease of the human
 “ species, during that season of affliction, has never
 “ been repaired in some of the fairest countries of
 “ the globe.”

FROM 1346 to 1350, the principal countries of the world were again visited with an extensive Plague. It broke out in *China* in 1346, and passed into the *East-Indies*, *Syria*, *Turkey*, *Egypt*, and *Africa*.

THE next year it raged on the other side of the Mediterranean. In 1348, and 1349, it raged in Hungary, in Germany, in Spain, in France, in Belgium and Denmark, in England, Scotland and Ireland.* The Plague, at the time now mentioned, was almost general, and the destruction of mankind by it, was beyond calculation.

MANY pages of history are filled with accounts of pestilential diseases which have thinned off the inhabitants of the world. At some periods the

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* *Mead on Pestilential Contagion.*

evil has been general, and at other times it has been confined to particular places.

IN 1656 the Plague was brought from Sardinia to Naples. It raged with excessive violence, and in less than six months carried off 400,000 of the inhabitants.

IN the latter end of 1664 several persons died of a pestilential disorder at Westminster, and in the spring after, London was visited with a dreadful Plague. In the months of August and September, the mortality was distressing beyond what had been known, in that city before.

“ABOUT the beginning of September the disease “was at the height.” Eight, and ten thousand, and even “twelve thousand died in a week.”

WITH such dreadful effect did the Plague continue to rage, until it had “carried off, as some “computed, about one hundred thousand people.”*

IN 1720, Sixty thousand died of the Plague in the city Marseilles.

WHEN we consider the manner in which the inhabitants of the Earth have been chastised at one time and another, what reason can be offered why we, on this quarter of the globe, should hope to
escape?

* Dr. Hodge's History of the Plague in London, 1665.

escape? Countries to all appearance as favourably situated for health, as the American States, have been scourged by the pestilence, and consumed by the judgments of Heaven.

LET us now apply the subject, and endeavour to have our hearts impressed with the thoughts which have been suggested.

ALTHOUGH we can claim no particular relation to the God of Heaven, in consequence of a covenant made with our Fathers, like that which was made with the Hebrew Patriarchs, we may gain important instruction from their history.

WHILE it is not pretended that the first English planters of this country were protected by miraculous interpositions of providence, it will be acknowledged their enterprize was astonishingly succeeded. A small number were protected among savages in an inhospitable wilderness, three thousand miles from their native country. They increased and multiplied, their posterity are now a powerful and numerous people.

THE inhabitants of no part of the earth have possessed, or do possess the means of happiness to higher perfection, than the inhabitants of the American States have possessed, and do generally possess, at this very day.

WE have, and we do enjoy all the civil and religious advantages which reasonable creatures, while in the present life, have any right to expect. The inhabitants of our country have enjoyed, and (except in some of the sea-ports, and great towns) do now enjoy as much health as the inhabitants of most other countries have enjoyed.—And what have been the effects of divine goodness? What fruit have we brought forth? Have we expressed that gratitude to a heavenly benefactor,—that contentment with our portion in life, which we ought to have expressed? And further let me inquire, What is the state of Religion? We blush to say.—We are obliged to confess, that while iniquity has abounded, the love of many has waxed cold. The friends of God and of Religion, may adopt the words of Jeremiah, with little variation and say, “The ways of Zion mourn, because *few* “come to the solemn feasts.”—Never was there a time, when sacred things were treated with more neglect. Multitudes speak of Religion as a thing of no consequence; while many treat its institutions with contempt.

IF our fathers were too strict in the observance of the Christian Sabbath, and the rites of religion, the present generation has certainly gone very far to the other extreme.

THE indifference—the luke-warmness of many who have professed a general friendship for the Christian Religion, has, we fear, encouraged its open enemies to blaspheme the name by which we are called ; and insult the authority of God.—

THE prophet was ordered to say, unto the whole family of the children of Israel, “ You only have
“ I known, of all the families of the earth ; there-
“ fore I will punish you for your iniquities.”

As the inhabitants of this land have been, and are now in possession of many advantages which they have not duly esteemed,—some of the most precious of which they have neglected or abused, there is reason to fear God will visit them with his judgments ; and make them know, as he did his people in ancient times, what an evil thing it is to despise his goodness, and trample on his laws. This to be sure, is not a comfortable thought : but if past dispensations of providence, excite such fears and apprehensions, we should be unwise to put them from us, however unpleasant.

THE judgments of God are now abroad in the earth, and some of them have already fallen upon the American States.

WHILE the most powerful nations of Europe are suffering the horrors of war, and are made the instruments

struments in providence of chastising each other, the inhabitants of the principal Cities and Towns on this Continent are afflicted, and many are consumed by a pestilential Epidemic.

THE Capitol of the United States, which a few weeks ago, was full of people,—the seat of government,—the resort of strangers who visit our country,—the abode of the industrious and of the rich, is now a city, almost left solitary.

THE Pestilence hath marked its way, with awful destruction: many have fallen before it. To escape its malignant breath, multitudes have fled. Men, women and children to the number of fifty thousand, it is said, have left their houses and their occupations, and sought protection in towns and villages where they had reason to hope, there was no infection. It is not possible for us to conceive of their afflictions and sufferings. We pray God to remove the stroke of his hand: to have compassion on his people: to heal and comfort them.

NOR is Philadelphia the only City which is distressed with the pestilential disorder, which has put on so threatening an appearance in our country. New-York, New-London, and several other Towns are suffering, in a greater or less degree, the same calamity.

Boston hath not escaped.—We had pleased ourselves too much, with the idea, that our northern situation, and healthful climate (under Providence) would have been our protection. We find ourselves mistaken. The wasting disorder hath already carried off a considerable number of our inhabitants. Our young men have fallen before it : Nor have grey hairs been a defence. Parents have been taken from children, and children from parents : The tenderest connections have been suddenly broken up and dissolved.

THIS new disorder, which hath in many instances attacked with violence, and hurried our friends and neighbours out of the world, hath produced a serious alarm.—Look at many of our streets, and to the store-houses, which have been usually full of merchandise, and of business, and your eye will affect your heart.

ALTHOUGH the number which hath fallen by the pestilential Epidemic is small, compared with the returns which have been made of the dead in Philadelphia and New-York, it is however enough to excite our apprehensions ; and ought to awaken within us very serious meditations.*

WHEN

* By collecting the returns which have been made by the Sextons, and the accounts which have been published by Order of the Selectmen of the Town, I find 115 have died of the prevailing Epidemic, from the 21st of June, when it first appeared, and the 8th of October,—the time at which this Discourse was published, i. e. 118 in 80 days.

WHEN suffering other calamities, such as have been occasioned by wars and civil commotions, we have been accustomed to cast the blame on some of our fellow-creatures : But when the Pestilence which walketh in darkness, comes to our houses, we are silent. We bow, & acknowlege the hand of God.

BUT we find support in trouble, when we consider, He who holds the winds, and directs the clouds where they shall drop the rain, hath the Pestilence and all diseases which afflict mankind, under his absolute controul. Let us therefore make him our fear, and there will be nothing that we shall have need to dread.

LET us pour out our souls before him and say—
 “ Spare us O Lord, we beseech thee ; O spare thy
 “ people, and bless thine inheritance. Remove
 “ thy stroke away from us, and consume us not in
 “ thine anger. Then will we praise thee for the
 “ health of our countenance. We will offer the
 “ sacrifice of thanksgiving for ever and ever.”



